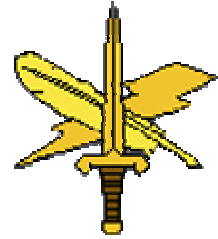




NEWS RELEASE

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AREA SCHOOLS MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR STUDENT INCREASES

Note: Kansas State University visual-journalism students spent part of the 2006 spring semester reporting on Fort Riley — in expansion and at war.

By Kimberly Mangus

The Geary County school district is preparing for a significant increase in its student population over the next five years.

The increase in students is due to the return of the 1st Infantry Division, known as the Big Red One. Some estimates say nearly 3,000 students will join area schools by 2011.

To accommodate the increases, voters of Geary County Unified School District 475 approved a \$33 million bond issue in October 2005.

The bond is being used to build a new middle school and a new elementary school in Junction City. Construction on the elementary school began in late May, and the middle-school groundbreaking was in June.

If construction proceeds on schedule, the schools are scheduled to open sometime in fall 2007.

Not only is the school district opening two new schools, but it is also making more space for students with additions and improvements to other schools in the district.

The Manhattan-Ogden school district is beginning to plan for an increase in students as well.

"This year alone we have had nearly 170 new military-related students enrolled," said Michele Jones, director of public relations for Unified School District 383 in April.

"We are expecting quite a jump in enrollment and are making adjustments and improvements now to ensure the quality of education students receive."

Although the Manhattan-Ogden school district sees many different military students each year, the increase in students is going to be quite different from anything yet experienced.

“We are working with the child services on Fort Riley to train our staff on terminology and the lifestyles of military students and families,” Jones said.

“It’s going to be an eye-opening experience.”

With the addition of the students, new staff members will also be required. Jones said USD 383 has approved the hiring of 16 new teachers for the 2006-07 school year.

“Most of the teachers will be at the elementary level, which is where we are expecting the largest increase of students,” Jones said.

Although a large increase is expected, the school district will not be receiving any additional funding.

“Government funding is distributed per pupil,” said Helen Petrik, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and Clerk of the Board of Education.

“We won’t be receiving any further funding just because we have a sudden influx of students.”